

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-2308

May 7, 2020

The Honorable Sarah Strommen  
Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
500 Lafayette Road  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Thank you for your efforts to keep Minnesotans safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate recent guidance from the State of Minnesota re-opening businesses related to outdoor recreation.

I support the “educational approach” that your Conservation Officers (COs) have been instructed to bring when interacting with anglers during Minnesota’s Fishing Opener this Saturday. The health and safety of Minnesotans remains paramount and I believe proper social distancing is something Minnesotans can be trusted to do safely in a boat, on open water, in fresh air. The authority to enforce social distancing is derived from the Stay at Home order by Governor Walz and it is my hope that common sense and an appreciation for the stress people are under is taken into consideration when COs are interacting with Minnesotans out on our beautiful waters this weekend.

I want to reiterate my hope that COs not issue fines to anglers from different households fishing in the same boat if they are otherwise behaving safely and breaking no laws. While the DNR has issued guidance on the matter, I believe assessing fines would create an unnecessary financial burden and exacerbate the economic hardship experienced by many Minnesotans.

We are currently experiencing the greatest economic downturn since the Great Depression and I implore you and your COs to consider this when addressing different households in the same watercraft. However, the work of the DNR remains important, and its mission: “to work with Minnesotans to conserve and manage the state’s natural resources, to provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and to provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.” Further, I want to reiterate the importance that anglers follow longstanding and well-known laws and regulations the state and DNR have long established.

During this global pandemic, small businesses are closed, worksites are halted, and millions are not collecting a paycheck. Minnesota’s Fishing Opener is a time to briefly escape the issues of the day and my hope is that anglers can safely launch their boat with their long time fishing partners - whether it be adult father and adult son or daughter who no longer live under the same roof, or two longtime friends who have a desire to continue their Fishing Opener tradition. Anything that would undermine the comfort, peace and respite this special weekend only Minnesota can uniquely offer would be greatly disappointing.

As a seasoned sportswoman yourself, you understand the importance and tradition of Minnesota’s Fishing Opener. Therefore, I kindly ask you and those who are patrolling the waters to take these concerns into consideration when working with the thousands of anglers who are seeking to naturally social distance and enjoy our great outdoors while in the midst of a global pandemic.



Pete Stauber  
Member of Congress, Minnesota’s Eighth Congressional District

CC: Governor Tim Walz